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Hair Cuttery Takes Gloves Off in Fight With Rival

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Hughes Hubbard & Reed is helping a well-known family-owned-and-operated hair salon chain escape a hairy situation.

On Oct. 5, Hair Cuttery's parent company, Ratner Companies, filed a lawsuit in the Circuit Court for Fairfax County, Virginia, accusing its far-larger rival, Regis Corp., of wrongfully raiding Ratner's corporate managers and stealing Ratner's confidential information and trade secrets.

According to The Washington Post, in recent months, Regis, a publicly-traded hedge fund controlled corporation that has been experiencing declining stock prices, and solicited and hired seven key Ratner managers, including one superstar, defendant Bobby Brown.

Brown occupied a unique role at Ratner as both a district manager and its only educator tasked with training Ratner employees on a companywide basis and across brand lines on Ratner's business strategies. Brown is alleged to have violated his noncompete and nonsolicitation agreements, and stolen confidential Ratner documents from a Ratner-owned computer laptop after he began working for Regis.

Ratner is seeking \$5 million in damages and injunctive relief to stop Regis and Brown from using Ratner's confidential information and prevent Brown from continuing to work for Regis and soliciting other Ratner employees. On Oct. 13, Judge Penney Azcarate scheduled a preliminary injunction hearing for Dec. 2 with an order restricting Regis and Brown as sought by Hughes Hubbard. Until further ruling, Brown cannot perform work for Regis nor solicit Ratner employees, and neither Regis nor Brown can use or disclose Ratner's trade secrets or confidential information.

"Regis has embarked on a desperate campaign to raid key Hair Cuttery personnel that we have built and created over decades," said co-founder and CEO Dennis Ratner. "Just because Regis is a huge publicly-traded corporation dominated by hedge funds doesn't mean it can raid a family business that prides itself first and foremost on its culture and employees-not its stock price."

Regis owns the largest chain of hair salons in the world, with nearly 10,000 locations. Its brands include SmartStyle, Supercuts, MasterCuts, Regis Salons, Cost Cutters, Sassoon Salon and Jean Louis David.

Ratner has grown from a single hair salon in Springfield, Virginia in 1974 to owning and operating nearly 1,000 salons in 16 states along the East Coast, Midwest and Mid-Atlantic region. "We are a family business and we will fight for our employees and for our company," Ratner said. "By filing this suit, we are taking appropriate measures to protect the relationships and family values we have always respected here at Hair Cuttery."

The Hughes Hubbard team representing Ratner includes Dan Weiner, Ned Bassen, Aviva Wernick, Kelly Foos, Esther Glazer-Esh, Hannah Miller and Debbie Placid.

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